

Ezra 3:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.

Analysis

The second year, second month marked approximately eighteen months after the return began. The timing was deliberate—the second month (Iyyar/April-May) corresponds to when Solomon began building the first temple (1 Kings 6:1), demonstrating intentional connection to historical precedent. Zerubbabel and Jeshua's joint leadership again emphasizes priestly-civil cooperation. The appointment of Levites 'from twenty years old and upward' as foremen lowered the typical thirty-year threshold (Numbers 4:3), suggesting practical need outweighed traditional restrictions. The verb 'to set forward' (*natsach*) means to oversee, manage, or superintend, indicating these Levites exercised real authority over the work. This demonstrates that leadership in God's kingdom requires both official calling and practical capability.

Historical Context

The organizational structure mirrored Solomon's temple construction, which also employed Levitical overseers. The reduction of age requirements from thirty to

twenty years may reflect the depleted population—fewer experienced Levites meant younger men must shoulder responsibility. This adaptation shows wisdom in applying principles flexibly while maintaining essential standards. The second month timing avoided the rainy season (November-March) and preceded the hot summer, providing optimal building conditions. Archaeological evidence of Persian-period construction techniques shows reliance on local limestone and imported cedar from Lebanon (v. 7), requiring significant organizational capacity and international trade relationships.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does the deliberate timing to match Solomon's temple construction teach about honoring historical precedent while adapting to new circumstances?
2. How does lowering the age requirement for Levitical service demonstrate the balance between maintaining standards and meeting practical needs?
3. In what ways can modern church leadership structures reflect the biblical pattern of combining official calling with demonstrated competence?

Interlinear Text

שָׁנָה	הַשָּׁנָה י	הַבָּאִים	אֵל	בֵּית	
year	Now in the second	and all they that were come out	H413	of the house	
H8141	H8145	H935		H1004	
זֶרֶבְבָּד ל	הָיָה לוֹ	הַשָּׁנָה י	בַּחֹדֶשׁ	יְרוּשָׁלַם	הָאֱלֹהִים
Zerubbabel	began	Now in the second	month	at Jerusalem	of God
H2216	H2490	H8145	H2320	H3389	H430
וְשָׂא ר	וְיֹצֵד ק	מָבָן	וְיֵשׁוּעַ	שֵׁ אֶלְתִּיאל	מָבָן
and the remnant	of Jozadak	old	and Jeshua	of Shealtiel	old
H7605	H3136	H1121	H3442	H7597	H1121
הַבָּאִים	וְכָל	הַלְוִיִּם	הַכֹּהֲנִים	אֶחֱיָהּ	מִן
and all they that were come out	H3605	and the Levites	the priests	of their brethren	
H935		H3881	H3548	H251	
מָבָן	הַלְוִיִּם	אֶת	וְנָעַם יָדוֹ	יְרוּשָׁלַם	מִהַשְׁבִּי י
old	and the Levites	H853	and appointed	at Jerusalem	of the captivity
H1121	H3881		H5975	H3389	H7628
בֵּית	מֶלֶךְ אֶכֶת	עַל	לִנְצֹחַ	וּמִעַלָּה	שָׁנָה
of the house	the work	H5921	to set forward	and upward	year
H1004	H4399		H5329	H4605	H8141
					עֶשְׂרִים
					from twenty
					H6242
					יְהוָה:
					of the LORD
					H3068

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 4:3 (References God): But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

1 Chronicles 23:4 (References Lord): Of which, twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD; and six thousand were officers and judges:

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